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The Shape of Things

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MEDIEVAL NUERNBERG IS THE SYMBOL OF Europe's modern neurosis. And each year the Nazi congress grows more fantastic. Hitler struts and boasts, deluded tens of thousands march and salute and cheer, while the world's suavest diplomats hang on the words of an upstart barbarian taking the shortest ways to power. They would cut nobler figures, these diplomats, if they could oppose at least a moral superiority to Hitler's dementia. Instead they are only inferior players of a game in which he calls all the turns. He has already got new thousands marching under bayonets—including now the "war babies" of the conflict to make the world safe for democracy. "British Fleet Off to North Sea Today." "New Reich Forts Manned by 50,000." "France Sends Reserves into Maginot Line." "Hungary to Rush Conscription Plan." "Voroshilov Watches Troop Maneuvers." For his part Hitler at his congress cements the new kind of alliances, "friendships against" his democratic enemies. The Italians and the Japanese are there in full force; a contingent of 100 Arabs adds a fresh note of suspicion—as well as grotesquerie—to the festival of "racial purity." As for the democratic ambassadors trailing to Nürnberg, including our own, they provide merely another foil for the fascist spectacle.

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ITALY'S TERRIBLE DECREES AGAINST JEWS, native and foreign, carries to one of its logical conclusions Mussolini's alliance with Hitler. According to the *Week* of London, Germany, in the course of "helping" Italy to bring its armed forces to efficiency, has obtained by threats and cajolery a measure of control over Italian policy. A large contingent of the Gestapo is said to be working in Italy—one wonders who speaks first when Hitler's gang meets Mussolini's mob on the streets of Rome. The Germans objected of course to Italy's admittance of refugees from Austria and Germany, and the decree exiling from Italy all Jews entering since 1919 was in compliance with this objection. The decree eliminating Italian Jews from every field of culture is a far more sweeping and brutal gesture of loyalty to the fascist

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religion. Both decrees serve other purposes. They offer the Jew as a scapegoat at a time when Italy's economic position is a little worse than usual and actually remove a certain amount of competition in some fields. The decrees do not state whether Jews will be allowed to take funds out of the country. They seem to hint at a refuge in Ethiopia for those who cannot find homes elsewhere—which bespeaks the failure of the Ethiopian adventure rather than any sympathy for Jews in distress.

*

MR. ROOSEVELT'S STUBBORN BEHAVIOR IN the primary campaign continues to bewilder his foes. They professed to see him gasping for breath after the balloting in South Carolina and California, but his Labor Day activity in Maryland cruelly destroyed any such impression. There are reasons for this firmness which Arthur Krock's psychiatric analyses have not revealed; the continuing fact is that while Mr. Roosevelt may lose an engagement in the primary it is necessary that he win the war for political realignment. In these terms he had nothing to gain from supporting the reactionary, Negro-baiting "Cotton Ed" Smith. And his program will ultimately profit from the campaign of enlightenment which was waged against Smith. Even in the context of the immediate situation, last week's results afford little ground for conservative rejoicing. It is difficult to see how anyone except a rabid exponent of American fascism could find Mr. Smith a palatable hero: his slogans suggest the Ku Klux Klan; his economic views are to the right of the chamber of commerce. In California, on the other hand, Senator McAdoo, despite the President's indorsement, was defeated by the advocate of a pension plan which has frightened every conservative economist; if California proved anything, it was that Mr. Roosevelt must expand his economic horizon if he is to dissipate the atmosphere in which Townsendism flourishes. It is worth noting that the Democratic choice for Governor of California is vigorously pledged to the freedom of Tom Mooney. Neither South Carolina nor California disturbed the continuity of what is basically an educational program; they merely emphasized the scope of the task which has been undertaken.

*

SOMETHING OF A MIRACLE IS THE REPORT of the President's Commission on Industrial Relations in Great Britain. Membership of the commission is no further left than Lloyd K. Garrison, dean of the University of Wisconsin Law School, and as far to the right as Henry I. Harriman, former president of the United States Chamber of Commerce. Yet the committee has made a unanimous report that might open a new era in American labor relations. Its conclusions, after a survey of the British scene, is that labor relations can be made stable and peaceful only when both employers and employees negotiate with each other through "trade unions"—the term connotes organizations of capital as well as of labor in England—embracing whole industries. The fallacies fostered by reactionary groups in this country about the regulation of labor unions in Great Britain are dispelled, and the answer is provided to those who believe that we should place legal restrictions on unions here. The report itself is the most lucid exposition we have seen of British labor law and experience in industrial relations. It shows that the United States is a half-century behind Britain in dealing with the problem and that the development of voluntary methods of conciliation and agreement are preferable to legal compulsion. Labor contracts, to note one important point, are not legally enforcible in the British courts. In strikes, to note another, British plants shut down; the era of the "blackleg"—the English equivalent for "scab"—is past. This report is a portent. Some of its signers—Mr. Harriman, Gerard Swope, and Charles R. Hook—command the respect of the business world. We hope it will read carefully a report in which its own representatives have collaborated.

*

THE POSSIBILITY THAT MEXICO WOULD IN the end knuckle under to the United States on the land-expropriation question was eliminated by President Cárdenas's speech at the opening of the Mexican Congress and by his government's ensuing note. The issue, as Cárdenas squarely stated it, is whether the common welfare should prevail over property rights. If this issue were clearly recognized by the American people, we cannot believe that they would support the State Department in its effort to reimpose the economic bonds which have held millions of Mexicans in virtual slavery for centuries. Unfortunately, however, the public has not been permitted to learn the facts of Mexico's struggle for national liberation. As effectively as in a totalitarian state the American press has presented only one side of the case—that of the downtrodden American capitalist. And the press has been supplemented by the widespread distribution of booklets issued by the oil companies, together with that most remarkable collection of anti-Mexican propaganda entitled "The Atlantic Presents." Technically, President Cárdenas scored a major point when he referred, if obliquely, to the failure of the United States to compensate foreigners when it confiscated gold holdings and abrogated the "gold clause" in bonds in the early days of the present Administration. We shall hope to see numerous editorials in the conservative press stressing the aptness of the parallel.

*

THE WORKERS' ALLIANCE AND DAVID LASSER, its director, are the subject of an article on another page of this issue. Since the article was written, Mr. Dies has turned his red-glass searchlight on the alliance and pro-

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nounced it red, and the question of fund-raising among members of the alliance has agitated the newspaper headlines. The Dies charge may be let lie. The question of fund-raising is worth a brief comment. Mr. Lasser, in a public response to a warning from Senator Sheppard, chairman of the Committee on Campaign Expenditures, pointed out that the alliance had no intention of collecting money from relief clients for the purpose of aiding any political party; that it hoped to raise funds among outside persons who feel that the alliance is performing a necessary function; and that it would continue to work for the election of public officials who would uphold and try to improve the condition of the unemployed. It is a straight answer. If the Workers' Alliance were imposing a check-off on its members for political purposes, Senator Sheppard and his chorus would have something to sing about. If the alliance can raise money on the basis of its program of maintaining the standard of relief, we can see no objection to it. And if the members of the alliance, and the unemployed in general, support those candidates for public office who understand and will fight for their interests, we see nothing but logic in their attitude.

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THE HORROR OF THE DEATHS IN THE Philadelphia County Prison at Holmesburg, Pennsylvania, is magnified by several facts that were revealed in the inquiry that followed the tragedy. It is not enough to know that four men were literally baked to death and that the twenty-odd survivors can scarcely reconstruct from memory the sixty hours of torture they endured. What is equally important is that this form of punishment—as fiendish as anything in the history of torture—has been a practice in this prison since 1929, and that the prison itself has been considered one of the better institutions in the state. The present warden was appointed in 1934 to institute a "new deal," and has been looked upon as relatively enlightened. The tragedy itself can be traced to a hunger strike provoked by the revolting diet which the prisoners were fed; this was the sixth desperate demonstration since 1929. Instead of improving the food the authorities introduced ruthless penalties to break the strike; when twenty-five men persisted in their protest, they were removed to the dreaded isolation building, where the heat was unleashed on the prisoners and the windows sealed. At the end of sixty hours four inmates were dead, and prison officials began to disclaim responsibility. As this is written, precise blame for the slaughter has not been fixed, but the solution does not merely lie in punishing a few sadists. Why did such a torture chamber exist at all in a modern prison? How many replicas of it can be found in jails throughout the nation? And how many similar brutalities escape public notice only because the heat is turned off in time?

Partnership with Japan

WITH the arrival in the United States of several Americans who have spent the greater part of a year in the occupied sections of China, we are beginning to get for the first time a picture of the full horrors of Japan's brutal campaign of subjugation. We have become hardened to war and to the cruelty that is ordinarily associated with it. The mass looting and rape which accompanied the capture of cities like Nanking, Hangchow, and Paotingfu horrified us as individuals but left us virtually unmoved as a country. We found it more difficult to accept the wholesale massacre of men, women, and children by the aerial bombardment of open cities such as Canton and Wuchang. But even these have been less harrowing than the story of the cold, relentless campaign of terrorism carried out month after month behind the Japanese lines. Every Japanese soldier, from private to general, has complete power of life and death over every Chinese. This power has been exercised with unbelievable irresponsibility.

But what has most disturbed those who have given any thought to the situation is the realization that America bears a large responsibility for the death and destruction wrought by Japan in China. The extent and importance of American economic aid to Japan has recently been dramatized in a booklet entitled "America's Share in Japan's War Guilt," published by the American Committee for Non-Participation in Japanese Aggression. It shows that the United States furnishes 54 per cent of Japan's imports of essential war materials, and that some supplies obtained from America are indispensable. A great many of Japan's best war planes would be grounded without American high-test gasoline. Japanese occupation of provinces such as Shansi and Shantung would have been impossible without large numbers of heavy American trucks. No country in the world except the United States could have furnished Japan with the mechanized equipment necessary for its campaign. No other country, under present circumstances, could furnish the airplanes needed to terrorize the civilian population of the unoccupied cities.

When confronted with the facts of American-Japanese cooperation in the invasion of China, most Americans immediately agree that the partnership should be dissolved. For the United States to talk about the desirability of maintaining peace and justice while assisting in the rankest outrage of modern history is hypocrisy of the worst sort. Dissolving this partnership is, however, a somewhat more complicated problem than appears at first glance. Obviously, there must be a government embargo on the shipment of war materials to Japan and the Japanese-occupied areas in China. Unofficial action by longshoremen and other labor groups refusing to

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move goods for or from Japan will help but is not enough. The State Department's attempts to stop the shipment of airplanes by moral suasion have failed.

It should be recognized, however, that even an official embargo has its limitations. At least another four months must elapse before Congress can act, months which may be crucial in China's ability to maintain its resistance. Moreover, an embargo on exports alone would be relatively impotent. It would be no trick for Japan to set up dummy companies in Hongkong, Shanghai, or Mexico to purchase the needed American supplies.

A ban on all aid to Japan, including exports of war materials, imports, loans, and credits, on the other hand, would hit Japan in a vital spot. For more than a year Japan has been raiding its gold reserve in order to buy the raw materials needed to sustain its invasion of China. Its stocks are approaching depletion. In March, 1937, Japan had a reserve of $456,000,000. Since then it has shipped more than $250,000,000 to the United States. Mining and confiscations in China have yielded small amounts of gold, but the total remaining in Japan's vaults today is less than $200,000,000. In recent months shipments have averaged well over $20,000,000 a month, and at this rate reserves will be exhausted by next summer. Lacking gold, Japan can purchase war materials only through loans and the foreign exchange obtained from exports. The United States has the power to close both of these channels.

Nor is it necessary to wait for official action to weaken Japan's ability to obtain supplies. Already scores of Japanese orders are being held up for lack of foreign exchange. The combined forces of the recession and the boycott cut Japanese sales in this country not less than 47 per cent during the first seven months of the year. Evidence that the boycott has been a major factor in this decline is seen in the fact that the importation of Japanese canned tuna fish, electric-light bulbs, and toys, which are readily identifiable as coming from Japan, fell off sharply, though these articles because of their cheapness are usually imported in greater amounts in periods of depression. The recession, on the other hand, may have accounted for a considerable part of the 34 per cent drop in silk imports. But even here the boycott has been a factor.

To dissociate ourselves from a share in the guilt of Japan's activities in China will not be easy, but it must be accomplished if the United States is to have any influence in behalf of decent international relations. Only last week Mussolini pointed to our sale of war materials to Japan as proof of the hypocrisy of Secretary Hull's protestations. We cannot bring back to life the million or more Chinese who have been killed as a result of American help to Japan. But we can act in time to prevent the whole of China from suffering the terror and servitude imposed on the people in the northern and central provinces that have come under Japanese control. This means that we must act now—visit Congressional candidates before election, support labor in its refusal to handle Japanese goods, boycott all Japanese products.

Policy and Politics

ONE of the keys to 1940 may lie hidden in the policy slips that provide the background for New York City's current rackets trial. For the trial has given the Republican Party its first national figure since Herbert Hoover began to expound the New Economics. District Attorney Dewey is made to measure—safe without being stodgy, a romantic figure but certainly no radical. Unless he is a man of extraordinary resistance to the lure of high office, he will be the Republican nominee for Governor of New York this fall. His most enthusiastic backers are already talking of 1940. The interest aroused by the trial, aside from its resemblance to a scenario of sure box-office appeal, is political rather than moral. Betting on numbers, a method of small-scale gambling that spread in Harlem after the war, was organized along big-business lines by the late "Dutch" Schultz when he muscled into the game in 1931; although most of the bets are for pennies or dimes, it developed into a $20,000,000 racket, with commensurate political power. James J. Hines, Tammany leader, on trial charged with protecting the racket for years, has been the subject of more whispers than any other man in New York politics. It is no secret that Samuel Seabury sought to pin something on Hines in the famous Hofstadter Committee inquiry into the affairs of Tammany. But Seabury failed. District Attorney Dewey is the first man who has been able to bring Hines into court.

Hines may be innocent. He may be acquitted. His counsel, one of the sharpest cross-examiners in the profession, has made some headway in shaking the testimony of racketeers who turned state's evidence. But if Hines isn't guilty, someone else is. The pattern taking shape, as witness follows witness, is a familiar one: an alliance between politics and crime to supply racketeers with protection and politicians with campaign funds—even with baskets to distribute to the poor. There is testimony that the two combined to elect a District Attorney who could be had. Again, the testimony may be false, but it can hardly be said that District Attorney Dodge became famous as a foe of racketeering. That Tammany district leaders were able to shift policemen about at will was the testimony of one who should know—John F. Curry, a former head of Tammany Hall. He was deposed in 1934 by Hines, and he has settled the score by taking the stand for the state.

Dewey's prosecution is likely to have more effect on the Democratic Party nationally than on the numbers racket. Tammany has been a handicap to the party for a

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long time. It sought to stop Roosevelt in 1932; the Hines case may lose him New York in 1938, and even hinder his plans in 1940. Already the danger that Dewey may win the governorship unless the Democrats put up a very strong candidate is bringing the first signs of a rapprochement between Governor Lehman and New Dealers offended by his stand during the court fight, for probably only Lehman or Wagner could defeat Dewey. That Supreme Court Justice Pecora, before whom Hines is on trial, would consent to run seems unlikely. Further complicating this already complex political situation are the rift between the Democratic Party and the American Labor Party and the possibility of an A. L. P.-Republican alliance in the gubernatorial campaign, the fierce dog-fight between the A. F. of L. and the A. L. P., and the dissension in the Labor Party itself between what might roughly be described as the Hillman and the Dubinsky wings. Before the party conventions take place at the end of the month it may be possible to fit together at least the important pieces of this political jigsaw puzzle.

What Hitler Wants

THE last word from Europe, as we go to press, is a report that "new and final" proposals of the Czechoslovak government would grant the Sudeten Germans three of their most urgents demands: territorial autonomy, full equality in the state, and recognition of German as the official language in the Sudeten territory. If autonomy means absolute rule, with the police power and the form of government itself subject to Sudeten party control—in other words, if it means a Nazi state within the borders of Czechoslovakia—the reported offer by the government would mean the beginning of the end of Czech independence. It would probably be accepted as a stop-gap solution by Hitler and would undoubtedly be welcomed by Chamberlain and his emissary, Runciman. Whether the people of Czechoslovakia would also indorse this probably fatal step remains uncertain; rumors of threatened revolt are already reported. Some days are likely to pass before the exact terms and their exact effect can be known. But while waiting for them we will do well to fix in our minds the larger outlines of the struggle.

It is natural, in a period of crisis, to be concerned with day-to-day shifts of balance, to examine anxiously even the small weights that may be thrown on one side or the other of the monstrous scales. The press and official discussions of the Nazi threat to Czechoslovakia have demonstrated this tendency. Every conversation or meeting held at Berchtesgaden or Eger or Prague or London is minutely analyzed; rumors are circulated; new proposals are scrutinized with hope or apprehension. The very tone of voice of a subordinate in the entourage of Viscount Runciman is rated on a scale of optimism. This desperate attention to detail is no doubt inevitable, but a more substantial understanding of the crisis in Central Europe might come from sitting under a tree with a copy of "Mein Kampf" and frankly confronting the unchanging purposes of Hitler.

Every country in Europe—including Germany—is afraid of war. But war will not be averted by shadings of diplomatic phraseology or by specific concessions one way or the other. Proposals and counter-proposals may serve the purpose of postponing the moment when the fundamental issue must be faced. But in the end they are evasions, not solutions. For the fact that must finally be acknowledged is the absolute, implacable determination of Adolf Hitler to bring Czechoslovakia under his power. The details may be subject to modification or compromise. The aim itself is not.

What does this mean in terms of the present situation? It means, first, that Hitler is willing to take quite considerable risks of general war to get a large part of his objectives immediately. Just how great a risk he will take and just how many of his objectives he will hold out for is still, as we go to press, an uncertainty; he made no reference to Czechoslovakia in his manifesto on the first day of the Nürnberg rally. But it is worth pointing out that with every day the crisis is prolonged in the shadow of Germany's mobilized army and navy, more and more concessions are dropped into his lap. Britain and France have warned Hitler not to seek his ends by the use of force; but they have proved again by their effective pressure on the Czechoslovak government that the mere threat of force reaps a handsome reward. The concessions that have already been made would encourage a less determined highwayman than Hitler to increase his demands.

If it were possible to believe that proposals to chip away the independence and sovereignty of Czechoslovakia were steps toward a peaceful solution of the conflict of national interest in that state, they would be well worth trying—even if Hitler gained in the process. Our labor contemporary, the *New Statesman and Nation*, has come out for boundary revision if a satisfactory compromise cannot be reached within the present limits of Czechoslovakia. "The strategical value of the Bohemian frontier should not be made the occasion of a world war. We should not guarantee the status quo." If this were the whole story, we should agree. But can anyone actually believe that a new boundary would give Hitler what he wants? When one is convinced, as *The Nation* is convinced, that his aggressive purposes are clear and his will inflexible, then one must look upon such proposals not as moves toward securing peace and a reasonable adjustment of claims but rather as stages in the conquest of Czechoslovakia.

From this point of view it matters little what Hitler may say this week at Nürnberg. Whether his words seem conciliatory or threatening, his actions will follow the

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course dictated by his ultimate aims modified only by his immediate limitations. He knows that Czechoslovakia will fight if he invades its borders. But he does not know whether under all circumstances England or even France and Russia will defend those borders. He has been warned against aggression, it is true. But what is aggression? Suppose the British government urges a surrender to Sudeten demands and the Czechoslovak government refuses; would armed intervention by Hitler be looked upon by the British as aggression? Suppose the Czechoslovak government agrees to proposals involving virtual surrender and the people rebel, bringing on a civil war; would intervention by Hitler in support of his Sudeten brothers be considered aggression? Suppose Hitler should demand the incorporation of the Sudeten region with the Reich and couple that demand with a promise to respect, or even to protect, the revised boundary of Czechoslovakia; if the Czech government should resist that reasonable readjustment and drive him to use force to free the Sudetens, would that be considered aggression? Perhaps, and yet perhaps not. After all, the British and French governments have studiously avoided taking the one step that would have forced Hitler to accept defeat of his aims in advance of war; they have not told him clearly that they, with Soviet Russia and as many of the smaller powers as they could induce to join them, would resist any further aggression on any pretext whatsoever. They let him have his way with Austria and have merely pretended to interfere in Spain. May it not be possible to find a formula whereby the surrender of Czechoslovakia can be encompassed either by agreement or, if the Czechs continue to be stubborn about their independence, by a war which will not be called a war and so will not be recognized as one? Such considerations as these, together with his estimate of the chance of a successful quick war, will govern Hitler's decision. Surely it will not be influenced by the desirability of "settling" the minorities dispute in Czechoslovakia.

Power-Company Morals

BY PAUL Y. ANDERSON

Knoxville, Tennessee, September 5

GALLONS of crocodile tears have been shed in recent years over the impending fate of the private power industry in the Tennessee Valley. Sympathetic souls are regularly implored to contemplate the plight of a poor but honest octopus which, in the face of its lofty aims and benevolent practices, is confronted with extinction at the hands of a heartless TVA. I never lost much sleep over this particular tragedy, but to those who have suffered on account of it a brief résumé of certain testimony recently given before the joint Congressional investigating committee should bring prompt relief. It concerns the efforts of the citizens of Chattanooga to own and operate their electric system. As an illustration of the morals and methods of the power industry it is a perfect little gem, and I commend it to the study of those individuals who profess to be mystified and grieved by the "persecution" to which the industry is exposed in a mounting number of communities.

The Tennessee Electric Power Company, which serves Chattanooga, is a subsidiary of Commonwealth and Southern, headed by that renowned apostle of better relations between the public and the utilities—Wendell Willkie. Three years ago the people of the city, finding themselves unable to purchase the private distributing system at a reasonable figure, called an election to authorize the issuance of $8,000,000 of bonds for the construction of their own system. At once, through a magic long since familiar, there appeared on the scene a "Citizens Taxpayers Association," sworn to oppose the bond issue on the ground that it would "increase taxes." In that holy endeavor it spent somewhat in excess of $23,000, of which sum, it has now been disclosed, $20,000 was contributed by Willkie from the Commonwealth and Southern treasury. A portion of the money was used to distribute whiskey among voters on Election Day. Two vacant lots were purchased in the names of out-of-town residents to enable them to vote. Among these "owners" were one hundred employees of the power company. The Citizens Taxpayers Association distributed circulars stating that when the local company was absorbed by the holding concern its capital structure had been written down $25,000,000, and that it had subsequently paid no service charges to the parent company. Actually, the capital structure had been inflated, and for three years the operating company paid a fee of approximately $150,000 a year to its parent. The head of the "association," a former school commissioner, sent letters to all teachers warning them that a vote for the bond issue was a vote to increase taxes. Alas, it was all in vain—the proposal carried by more than two to one.

But the fight had just begun. Soon there was agitation for additional referendums. Among other things it was proposed that the city be prohibited from erecting poles on streets where the private company's wires were strung. It was proposed that the voters be asked to determine

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whether the bonds to be issued should be general obligations or strictly revenue bonds. Much of it was confusing to the voters, as it was undoubtedly intended to be. In the original fight the power company had been handicapped by lack of a newspaper, while the bond issue was vigorously advocated by the *News,* published by George Fort Milton. In reprisal, the power company withdrew all advertising from the *News.* Next year the company found a champion in the *Free Press,* and promptly the company became the *Free Press's* best advertising customer. Testimony before the Congressional committee showed that in 1937 a Chattanooga department store used 201,549 lines of advertising in the *Free Press,* for which it paid 54.9 cents an inch, and that during the same year the power company used 219,520 lines for which it paid $1.26 an inch. Francis Biddle, committee counsel, said the two accounts were chosen for comparison because they were most nearly identical in linage and the amount of color used. The rate to other department stores was still lower. The explanation of the high rate paid by the power company, as given by the general manager of the *Free Press* is, to say the least, interesting. He said the department stores had contracts, while the power company paid the "open rate." Asked why the power company didn't obtain the contract rate, he replied that its officers didn't know about it. Asked why he didn't tell them about it, he replied: "Because if I can get $1.98, I don't want to take ninety-eight cents."

Most active in circulating petitions to block city-owned power was Harold M. Humphrey, a young and briefless lawyer. He testified that approximately half the money expended by him in this effort was supplied by McDonald, the *Free Press* publisher, who also indorsed his note for $2,500, which Humphrey borrowed to buy stock in the rival *News!* Helping in the circulation were employees of the power company. The head of the Public Power Board testified that petitions were circulated at the polls on registration day and represented as part of the procedure of registering. Also, as might be expected, they were represented as instruments to "prevent higher taxes." But again in vain. One petition bore 6,000 names, but the election commission threw out 5,200 of them as the names of persons ineligible to vote. The head of the power board told the committee that he did not believe the negotiations between Willkie and Director David E. Lilienthal of the TVA for purchase of the private facilities justified the city in longer delaying the construction of its own system. "The delay is costing our citizens $1,000,000 a year, and they are tired of waiting," he said.

The city of Knoxville, after heroic efforts, has announced the purchase of the entire distribution system of the local electric company, a subsidiary of National Light and Power. TVA power from Norris Dam will start flowing into the system at once. Included in the purchase price were bonds at $975 which sold on the Curb this year for $572.50, and considerable facilities which the city had been compelled to duplicate in the long campaign to force a sale at a respectable price. Rates paid by consumers will provide for depreciation, for the payment to the city annually of a sum equivalent to the taxes paid by the private company, and for retirement of the total purchase price and all other debts at the end of twenty years. While making these provisions the system will show a net profit of about $200,000 a year, unless it elects to reduce rates still further. The city was to take over on Friday, the bonds having already found a market at a low interest rate. The reduction in rates goes into effect at once. It amounts to 40 per cent and will save the consumers more than $1,000,000 the first year, the saving naturally to increase as consumption jumps. TVA marches ON!

Hitler Will Decide

BY M. W. FODOR

Prague, August 27

THE next weeks will settle the fate of the world. Germany will have to decide whether it will take, at the price of a world war, the Sudeten German areas of Bohemia or whether it will accept a temporary compromise. The Czechoslovak problem at present divides itself into two parts: the negotiations between the government and the Sudeten Germans, with the mediation of Lord Runciman; and Germany's attitude toward a possible settlement. Lord Runciman cannot, and will not, decide anything. If Germany realizes that it cannot afford a world war, then Runciman's mediation will be a welcome way out. If, however, the war party gains the upper hand in Berlin, then nothing, not even the presence of Lord Runciman, can prevent war in Central Europe.

It is obvious that Germany wishes to envelop its intentions and aims, its preparations and underground machinations, in as thick a fog as possible. Its probable course, therefore, can only be guessed—it is impossible to draw deductions with absolute certainty. If this Czech conflict were a logical affair, the solution would be easy. Czechoslovakia is willing to go to the very limits of

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possible concessions; it is reluctant to grant only two of the German demands: first, complete territorial autonomy for the Sudeten areas, and, second, the establishment of Führer-led totalitarian units within the boundaries of the republic. If Germany really only wanted to assure the maximum benefits to Germans in Czechoslovakia, then with or without Runciman an agreement could be reached within two weeks. But its aim is domination of Southeastern Europe, and Czechoslovakia with its French and Russian alliances is a serious obstacle to this line of expansion. What Germany really wants is that Czechoslovakia give up the Russian alliance.

The plight of the Sudeten Germans is merely exploited as an excuse. Why were not the Germans in Poland or in South Tyrol singled out for Germany's next step? Simply because both Italy and Poland are connected with Germany through treaties of friendship. Germany can gain its end in Czechoslovakia in one of two ways—by fighting it out, or by disrupting the Czech state by internal propaganda. If the nationalities keep up their campaign of undermining the government, the Germans hope that a constellation of groups can be achieved which will repudiate the Russian alliance. This latter process, however, would be a slow one. And Germany is in need of a quick success. This is at present Hitler's dilemma.

The Germans apparently missed the psychological moment to cut the Gordian knot. The truth is that Germany, twelve months ago, had made all preparations for a military invasion of Czechoslovakia. Leaving the Austrian question in the hands of Goebbels's propaganda department, influential elements in the Nazi Party were contemplating a *Blitzkrieg* (lightning stroke) against the Czechs. Bohemia was to be the Abyssinia of the Third Reich, and the general in charge of the preparations was Reichenau, commander of the Munich army corps. It was only in January of this year that Hitler and Göring came to another conclusion. Internal dissatisfaction as well as monarchist tendencies in the army alarmed them, and the old nostalgia of both Hitler and Göring for their Austrian home caused them to decide for a quick success in Austria. The generals opposed the Austrian plan, and Hitler carried out the purge of February 4. One month later his troops entered Austria.

It was a fatal mistake for Germany to choose Austria, which was in any case ripe to fall to it in a few months' time, and not Czechoslovakia. Last March there was a crisis in England and no government in France, and Czechoslovakia's military strength was not so great as it is today. There would have been severe fighting, but at that time Czechoslovakia could probably have been conquered after a war lasting a few months. The danger of foreign intervention was less in March than it is today. The whole situation is less favorable now for Germany, and the army command knows this. But the Nazi leaders are divided. There is a strong war party headed by Himmler, the powerful and sadistic chief of the German police and Gestapo. General Keitel is Himmler's military accomplice. General von Reichenau is also with him, but Reichenau's star has declined since the "occupation" of Vienna—he has been accused of great negligence in preparing this "attack." Himmler, assisted by Ribbentrop and others, maintains that England's firmness in May was incidental, that it was the mood of a scare and will not be repeated. These men are convinced that the war would remain an isolated one and thus have a chance of comparatively quick success.

It is needless to say that their calculations are without sense, though the sphinx-like attitude of Chamberlain reinforces Herr Himmler's counsels. Other persons high in the Nazi Party and the army leaders realize that such a war could hardly remain isolated. It will depend on Hitler's mood whether the die will be cast in favor of war or peace. For this reason a prediction about coming events based on logical calculation is impossible. But let us take stock of the signs which point toward a coming war and of those which indicate that peace may after all prevail.

The calling of 1,300,000 reserves, the employment of several hundred thousand men on feverish fortification of all the frontiers, the announced intention of keeping the last class of soldiers under arms after October 1, when they would normally be sent home, would indicate that Germany is making serious preparations for imminent war. The pourparlers with Hungary suggest the same thing. Secret orders for Germans abroad telling them how to act in case of war also confirm Germany's intention to strike at an early date. Whispered propaganda asserts that Hitler will present an ultimatum to Czechoslovakia on September 15, and that if this is not complied with, Germany will march across the border. All this, however, sounds simpler than it is. A nation does not start a war when the enemy is fully prepared and watchful; it does not advertise its warlike preparations. Yet everywhere the impression prevails that Germany deliberately lets this news "leak out"—news which should remain confidential. This again would suggest that the concentration of troops at the maneuvers is rather bluff and blackmail than a genuine threat of war.

Let us analyze the situation to see whether a *Blitzkrieg* against Czechoslovakia is possible at all. Well-informed Czechs regard the German maneuvers, at least in the present stage, as a general rehearsal for a mobilization and not a mobilization as such. The maneuvers serve the purpose of perfecting the training of the youngest and oldest classes of reserves and also of testing the value of the new laws for the conscription of labor. Nevertheless, Czechoslovakia is compelled to take all precautionary measures, because even if the enemy has not yet fully decided whether or not to attack this year, even if it is unwilling to enter upon an armed conflict, a frontier

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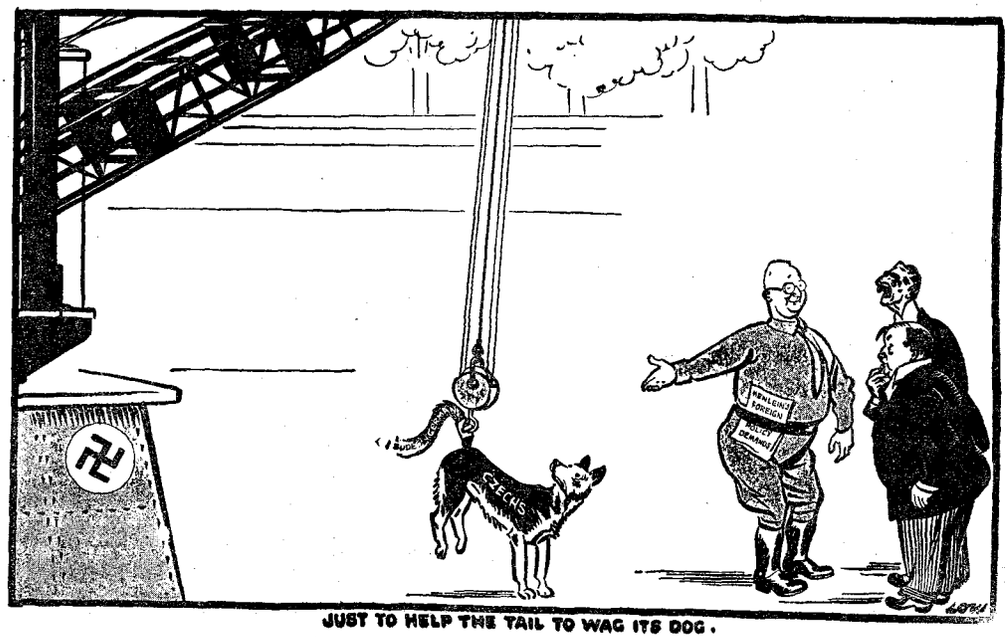
incident could provoke a war. If a serious frontier incident or a serious incident in the Sudeten German area should occur, the presence of such large armed forces of Germans so near to the Czech frontier would be highly dangerous.

The Germans apparently intend to make the world believe that a lightning blow against Czechoslovakia would seriously affect the morale of that country. That is, however, at least doubtful. Czechoslovakia has a very efficient, disciplined population with good nerves. The Czechs are extremely patriotic, and they know that if they are attacked, they will have to fight for their very existence. They have at least a quarter of a million men constantly under arms, and this army is well disciplined and excellently equipped. Moreover, Czechoslovakia has a long chain of fortifications on its German frontier, a Maginot line which is more modern than its French pattern, and the French general staff has given the Czechs the benefit of all its experience so that these fortifications can be regarded as the last word in such a defense technique. During the past weeks the defenses on the Austrian frontier have also been completed. Czechoslovakia's air force is two-thirds as large as the French air force. Its anti-aircraft guns are famous, its tanks and anti-tank guns are good, and its artillery is first class. For this reason Czechoslovakia, even if it is left to stand alone, will be neither an Austria nor a Spain; the war would be a long-drawn-out one, and the front would remain immovable for many months. And Germany does not want a long war, first, because with the passing weeks foreign intervention would become more likely, and, second, because of its situation with respect to raw materials. These facts are known to the German army, but the fanatical party men don't want to believe them. Hitler, as supreme umpire, will have to decide whether the army's point of view or Himmler's wish shall prevail.

The German attitude toward the Sudeten German problem is also not clear. Sudeten German tactics, like Austrian Nazi tactics in the past, are dictated from Berlin, or Berchtesgaden. During the early part of the summer Sudeten tactics consisted in accusing the Czech government of bad faith and alleging that the Czechs were sabotaging every attempt to reach an understanding. When, however, on June 30 of this year the government completed its nationality statute and handed it over for study to the Nazis of Czechoslovakia, the Sudeten Germans suddenly changed their course and followed ca'canny tactics—trying to drag out negotiations indefinitely.

Then suddenly two mysterious events took place. Major Wiedemann, Hitler's personal aide-de-camp, visited London, and a few weeks later Lord Runciman was sent as an "observer" to Prague. It is difficult to prove a connection between Wiedemann's journey to London and Runciman's mission to Prague, but one cannot help believing there must be one. Why would Germany ask for a mediator? The most plausible answer to this question is the following: Germany is undecided whether the Sudeten German problem shall be solved by a *Machtwort,* which means war, or by a compromise. It will be Hitler's task to find out "intuitively" whether the sword or the word shall decide. In the meantime valuable weeks must be gained, weeks for certain necessary military preparations. For this reason we find both Berlin and the Sudeten Germans employing dilatory tactics. If the decision is against a war, then Runciman's presence will be welcome. Then the Nazis can say: It was impossible to come to an agreement with a Bolshevik Czechoslovakia, but it was difficult to decline the offer of an honest jobber.

If there is a compromise, we must keep in mind this fact: its value will be only as great as that of the Austro-German agreement of July 11, 1936. The July agreement created a breathing spell for Austria, because Germany did not then want to be involved in an affair which might bring it into armed conflict with Italy. Twenty months later Germany knew that Italy would not fight for Austrian independence. Thus a new agreement between the Sudeten Germans and Prague would mean that Germany is waiting for the time when it can be sure either that Great Britain will not fight for Czechoslovakia or that Russia is unable to intervene.



JUST TO HELP THE TAIL TO WAG ITS DOG.

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Lasser and the Workers' Alliance

BY SELDEN RODMAN

NEXT to a stockbroker and a personal footman a diamond-cutter is probably the most unnecessarily extravagant appendage to an up-to-date social order that you could think of. Yet it was the discovery that the apple-vendor he passed every morning in 1929 was a highly skilled diamond-cutter who couldn't find work that aroused David Lasser to his championship of the unemployed. The paradox is significant. It indicates that, for all his training as an engineer and his pioneer work as editor of the first "technocracy" magazine, not cool reason but a warm heart made the president of the Workers' Alliance what he is. The most effective spokesman the millions of American unemployed have yet found was not aroused by four years in the laboratories of M. I. T. A cost-accountant's depression balance sheets did not convince him; nor did the experience of being fired from New York Edison's technical staff for protesting against a "seasonal" layoff. The idealist became a crusader only when day after day he was confronted with the spectacle of a man of skill reduced to the most superfluous form of peddling.

The Workers' Alliance of America occupies a unique position in American life today. In no other country has a union of the unemployed been organized with such success. Not that its numerical strength is great—200,000 out of an estimated 12,000,000 jobless is not an impressive figure (Colonel Frey's more recent estimate of 800,000 is more hopeful!)—but that it has proved itself irresistible in action. Whether as an organizer of demonstrations to wring appropriations from callous state legislators, or as a prime mover in national hunger marches, or as a bargaining agency for the vast body of WPA workers, the Workers' Alliance has "worked."

Back in the days when a recession was bluntly referred to as a depression the impotence of unions of the unemployed was matched only by their multiplicity. First on the scene were the Unemployment Councils, organized by the Communist Party and ably led by Herbert Benjamin, now secretary-treasurer of the Workers' Alliance. Militant, but intolerant of competitors and politically "branded," they made little progress. The Unemployed Leagues, first organized under the auspices of A. J. Muste's Conference for Progressive Labor Action, grew rapidly in Ohio under such leaders as Arnold Johnson and Bill Truax, but their boast of a national membership of 2,000,000 was a romantic climax to their last convention in 1934. The organization evaporated overnight, and numerous smaller groups (including the original Workers' Alliance, established by the Socialist Party and the League for Industrial Democracy) fell heir to its mythical glory.

Early in 1935 the present Workers' Alliance was born. At its first convention the leaders of the old "alliance," the "councils," and the "leagues" made up its unified executive board in something of the ratio of 11 to 7 to 2. Under Lasser's leadership the principles of "democracy, non-partisanship, no discrimination, and militancy in action" were firmly established. Under these principles the organization grew. The following year it absorbed the white-collar branches. In June of 1937 it held a convention at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which was a model of disciplined procedure and was attended by 600 delegates from 43 states. On the twenty-third of this month, in Cleveland, with its membership increasing at the extraordinary rate of 15,000 a month, the alliance will hold its fourth convention. The delegates will consider among other matters the growing political influence that is already making it a factor second to Labor's Non-Partisan League in the Presidential offensive against reactionaries.

The four years' growth of the unified organization has been marked by three significant developments. The first was the transplantation of labor's "sitdown" technique to the relief situation. The trial encounter took place in March, 1936, at Madison, Wisconsin. When the pickets arrived at the Capitol, Phil La Follette greeted them in person and advised them to "turn the heat" on the legislators. Ten days later, with the charges of rule by minority coercion growing, he asked them to leave. Early in May of the same year Governor Hoffman of New Jersey informed John Spain of the Workers' Alliance that nothing short of "invasion and insurrection" could make him "borrow money or divert state funds" for adequate relief. The Workers' Alliance took him at his word. "An insurrection is in progress," said Spain. And for nine days a hundred workers made themselves as comfortable as possible among the oaken desks and brass rails. Three months later, inspired by this example, the Pennsylvania organization marched its tattered infantry into the galleries of the state senate at Harrisburg—and didn't get out until the startled legislators had promised an additional $45,000,000 for the coming six months.

One of the smallest, perhaps, but certainly the most effective of the hunger marches that the national capital has seen was the Workers' Alliance pilgrimage of 3,000 in the fall of 1937. Its immediate cause was Representa-

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tive Woodrum's amendment to the relief act, which declared that, regardless of need, the $1,500,000,000 appropriation had to do for the entire year. With the prospect that hundreds of thousands of WPA workers would be fired to make the money last, the Workers' Alliance drafted the Schwellenbach-Allen resolution, which declared that no WPA worker could be fired unless assured of work in private industry at decent wages. The resolution never got to the floor, though 200 Congressmen and 40 Senators were reported lined up for it. But the march—Congress decamped the day before in the nick of time—probably did much to cause the President to announce that WPA discharges would temporarily stop.

Last March, joining with a number of the most progressive labor unions, the Workers' Alliance acted in still a third direction in behalf of the jobless. The National Conference on Work and Security met in Washington. President Roosevelt, in a letter to the conference addressed to David Lasser, asked the conference to submit a program. There is good reason to believe that that program stimulated the drive against deflation that followed. In any case to the Workers' Alliance must go the credit for the amendments to the Relief and Recovery Act making discrimination against a union WPA worker a crime, giving all but administrative employees the right to run for political office, and providing that relief workers receive not less than the minimum pay provided in the wages-and-hours law. "Who has carried the burden of unemployment?" said Lasser at the time. "The unemployed have carried it to the tune of about $80,000,000,000 net loss in wages, to the tune of millions of hungry bodies, filthy homes, ragged clothing, hopeless lives."

David Lasser is proud of the fact that red-baiting of the unemployed unions has almost completely subsided. Readily admitting his own Socialist beliefs and the radical affiliations of some of his closest associates, he sets the example for the organization by rigidly ruling out political partisanship in its affairs. He is a Marxist—but with a pragmatic difference. "We work experimentally," he says. "We have a goal, but we feel our way toward it. There are no dogmas. It's a blundering way maybe; but American."

Lasser was born in Baltimore in 1902, one of five children, and at fourteen went to work as a bank messenger. But in the same year we entered the war. The young idealist swallowed the war propaganda whole. He lied about his age; saw service overseas; was gassed; came back as a sergeant. His yearning for a worthy mission was unfulfilled, but he had the rising optimism of the '20's in his blood. After graduation from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1924 he tried a succession of minor engineering and administrative callings. What could an engineer do to further the cause of human welfare? New machines seemed to be bringing more misery than leisure. For a short time he drifted in a visionary direction. In 1929 he even served as president of the American Interplanetary Society, which considered the feasibility of sending a rocket to the moon. As an engineer, he cast his ballot for Herbert Hoover in 1928. But with the social appeal of "technocracy" to sober his fancy and the apple-vending diamond-cutter as a daily reminder that science and skill have no future in a scarcity economy, he came down to earth with a thud. "I decided," he said later, "that it was necessary to remake the earth before delving into life on the moon."

Remaking the earth began for David Lasser in 1933. While still at work for Gernsback Publications he helped to organize the Lower West Side Unemployed League in New York. Through a succession of mergers and growing efficiency the local group expanded until the absorption of all important unions took place in 1936. His philosophy was now fairly consistent. "This is a labor movement," he announced. "The Workers' Alliance does not want relief primarily. It wants jobs." He tried to secure affiliation with the C. I. O., but the new labor movement, while friendly to the alliance, was cool to the proposal.

Short and quiet-spoken, even when he harangues a convention, Lasser has retained his leadership not merely because of the visible integrity that makes his disinterestedness so apparent. His hair is thinning and he suffers from rheumatism, but in his deep-set eyes, expressive of an impersonal compassion, is seen the man's power as well as his idealism. He has none of the martyr's psychology. He has seen too many emotional conversions and bitter disillusionments to be impressed by the sound of his own voice. He has read too much history (it is his principal "recreation") to measure progress deceptively in terms of immediate successes. Thoroughly an "organization man," he believes in planning for abundance but is suspicious of long-term economic measures that lack popular backing. Internationalist in theory, he has not forgotten the horror of the last war nor the ocean between its intentions and its results. "Europe," he says, "may look black with its present conflicts and its intolerances, but there is more danger, at the same time that there is more hope, in the strangling economy of America. We have more unemployment, remember, than any other country in the world today. And from the beaten psychology of unemployment springs fascism. If we can turn that psychology to hope through militancy—well, we have very little time."

With his wife, an accomplished sculptress, and his two children he lives in a small flat in the Georgetown section of Washington. His salary, like that of the two other paid organizers for the alliance, is $25 a week.

Go to the Walker-Johnson Building, just a few blocks from the national headquarters of the Workers' Alliance, and you will find another reason for Dave Lasser's suc-

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cess. "Give us decent wages and working conditions," says the Workers' Alliance to the WPA (in effect), "and we'll do your lobbying for you; we'll see that Congress appropriates the money and that the states do their part." And from Harry Hopkins's headquarters comes the reply (in effect): "Go to it, boys!" You will find hardly a man in the huge government agency who hasn't a friendly feeling for the union; not one without respect for its competent leader. Much of the credit for the smooth relations between the two must go to the WPA's highly intelligent, progressive Employment Division. Its recent pamphlet for workers, "Our Job with the WPA," asks and answers certain questions: "*Q.* May a union of project workers send a representative or delegate to the WPA district officials to adjust grievances? *A.* Yes. *Q.* Does the representative have to be a WPA worker? *A.* No. *Q.* Is it all right for me to join a workers' union? *A.* Yes."

Unfortunately, no matter how much WPA appropriations and efficiency are increased, no matter how successful the alliance may be in keeping up standards and bolstering morale, in the long run both are waging a losing battle—and they know it. The aggressive belligerency of a labor meeting has been contrasted with the static belligerency of a rally of the jobless. It must inevitably be so. The unemployed man, even the WPA worker, senses that he is outside the economy, at best tolerated and supported by it. "Hysteria is always at his elbow." Here and now, however, the role of the Workers' Alliance cannot be overestimated. To thousands of jobless, tricked into regarding unemployment as an act of God, it has given new self-respect; to men who were resigned to quietly starving, it has imparted the will to fight for life. It has made the once popular demand for a dole indecent—almost subversive. Its campaign deserves the support of every progressive American. But that campaign cannot be finally won until the defensive becomes an offensive; until the enthusiasm of the middle classes and small business is enlisted for a program that will make unemployment itself an impossibility.

Move Over, Mr. Frankenstein

BY MORRIE RYSKIND

I NEVER read Mrs. Shelley's book, but I saw the picture. Little did I think as I watched Frankenstein create Boris Karloff and live to rue the day that it was a portent for me. Now I know that the fates meant it as a kindly warning. Alas, I took it literally, missing entirely the moral that I now see all too well. I was frightened—but not enough, it turns out.

All this is occasioned by the fact that my name has been appearing in the Los Angeles papers in connection with the Dies investigation. The Hollywood Anti-Nazi League is accused of being a Communist organization, and the local gazettes include my name in a list of the founders. Now it so happens that I'm not a founder or even a member of the league. I refused to join because I felt that the title Didn't Tell All. Ever since my innocent heart was broken by learning that Prince Mike Romanoff was neither a prince nor a Romanoff, I have looked with extreme dubiety at titles. Perhaps, in my bitterness, my skepticism has gone too far, but you know the old phrase, "Once bitten, twice shy." Indeed—and I say this reluctantly—there have even been times when I have been tormented by the thought that *The Nation* doesn't always speak for the nation.

At any rate, my cynicism led me to believe, rightly or not, that the Anti-Nazi League was secretly organized by much the same bunch of babies who had organized the League Against War and Fascism—which turned out, curiously enough, to be a pro-war league against fascism. As soon as this mistake became too evident, the organization adopted the alluring alias of the American League for Peace and Democracy. Under this pseudonym it recently did a nice job of mayhem on Dr. Harry Barnes, who, they tell me, will recover but will never be the same again.

So, what with one thing and another, Mr. Dies, I am not guilty of belonging to the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League. Yet, since I want my conscience clear, I plead guilty to a far greater charge. I'm really the guy who is responsible for *all* the subversive influences in Hollywood. (Cries of "No! No!") Please, you must hear me out; the evidence is indirect, but Krylenko got a lot of counter-revolutionaries on less direct testimony, and now Vyshinsky is going to get Krylenko on even less. A couple of years ago, when I first came to Hollywood, I was dismayed by the fact that I couldn't get anybody to talk politics. Fresh as I was from New York, where you could always go into "21" and get a discussion from Morris Ernst and Heywood Broun, it was more than I could stand. I did what I always do when things go wrong in this less than perfect world: I wrote a complaining piece for *The Nation* about it, knowing that would set the matter right.

And did it? Oh, boy—look at these scars! The issue containing my piece had just reached Hollywood when

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I began getting dirty looks and even dirtier phone calls. Indignation meetings were hurriedly called by the aroused citizenry, some of whom were under the impression that I had attacked the climate. Posses were formed, and in no time the liberal boom was on. It was nothing for a small group to form overnight half a dozen liberal organizations—and when I say liberal, I don't mean any small-time Ryskind liberalism, either. I mean a streamlined super-colossal-gigantic liberalism; liberalism, in short, on a Hollywood scale.

Well at first—like Frankenstein—I was ecstatic. Some of the producers, reading the piece, charged I was being bought with Moscow gold, but I waved that aside. I was enjoying the godlike feeling of creation, and in addition I had hungered and thirsted for liberal talk for a long time and here it was. I'll say it was! You could go to a meeting every night, and on Sundays you could go to two or three. I practically gave up my wife and children to serve on Scottsboro committees and Tom Mooney committees. Then one day I suggested that it might be fine to get up a Radek committee.

In the frenzy of oratory that followed that naive suggestion of mine, I was called everything under the sun including that terrible word "Trotskyite!" In the cross-examination that ensued it was proved that I had had dinner with Max Eastman, and had read and admired Eugene Lyons's "Assignment in Utopia." Further, it was brought out that I had voted for Norman Thomas in 1932 and contributed to the Socialist campaign.

Naturally, most of the liberals stopped asking me around, but one or two homes were still open to me. I should have held my tongue, I know, and I honestly tried. But I could not resist questioning the packing of the Supreme Court and the Divine Birth of Mr. Roosevelt. That was the Final Straw. Immediately I was charged with having sold out to Wall Street, and in the last election of the Screen Writers' Guild it was pointed out that I had sold out to the producers.

So now here I am, with all the liberal talk in the world and not a drop to drink. It is a little as though Adam and Eve, after eating the apple, had turned around and kicked Jehovah out of the Garden of Eden! Even the money I get is vastly exaggerated, and doesn't compensate me for the vanished delights. Moscow doesn't send as much as it used to weekly, and under the circumstances I can't blame them; Wall Street is six months behind on payments; the producers are in 77-b, and send only meager amounts instead of the huge sums they promised; and even Trotsky has been paying off in Mexican dollars, in spite of a gentleman's agreement to pay in American money. I am compelled to eke out a living by occasional contributions to *The Nation.*

I have gone back to my wife and children, who—bless them!—pretend bravely that nothing has happened. Filling the days formerly devoted to meetings is not easy. But I am managing. Work is the great healer, and when I am not working I play some golf. Since I entered Coventry I have managed to cut my score from 121 to 113. Petty, maybe, but when the Larger Pleasures are denied, one takes refuge in what one can.

In the Wind

ALTHOUGH REPORTS from Hollywood have hinted that Italy's disapproval is responsible for the delay in screening "Idiot's Delight," the real extent of the "disapproval" has not been disclosed. In a private letter to Robert Sherwood, author of the play, who was also preparing the screen adaptation, M. G. M. officials quoted a warning by the Italian government that it would not only bar future M. G. M. films if "Idiot's Delight" appeared but also "be unable to guarantee" the personal safety of M. G. M.'s agents in Italy.

REPRESENTATIVES OF *The Nation's Business,* the magazine published by the United States Chamber of Commerce, are asking for subscriptions on the ground that support of their venture is a method of "combating communism." A solicitor visiting a New England publisher casually remarked that the time was approaching when advocates of "subversive ideas" would be lined up against a wall and shot. When asked who would define "subversive ideas," he at first answered, "The people at the top." Then, after a moment's meditation, he qualified it: "The people who have made America what it is."

A NEW aspect of the current anti-Mexican drive was recently brought to light in New Orleans. A resident of that city, planning to visit Mexico, consulted the Esso (Standard Oil) tourist office about routes. He was informed that the office's supply of Mexican maps was exhausted. He was also warned that Mexico's roads are bad, its gas inferior, and conditions in the country generally ominous. The bureau was "not advising" its patrons to visit Mexico.

DISMAYED BY a detailed report of anti-Japanese sentiment in America which appeared in the Osaka *Mainichi* in July, Japanese authorities are launching a new propaganda enterprise. It is called the "Japanese-American Society of Fellow-Thinkers" and is designed to inform Americans about "the new situation" in Asia.

THE HEARST newspapers have been rabid critics of the Mexican government's policy toward foreign landowners. Not long ago it was reported that among properties recently taken over were large holdings of William Randolph Hearst. But signals in the Hearst organization must have got mixed; the Hearst-owned *Cosmopolitan* invited Stuart Chase to write a refutation of the anti-Mexican propaganda contained in *The Atlantic Presents.*

[*We invite our readers to submit material for In the Wind —either clippings with source and date or stories that can be clearly authenticated. A prize of $5 will be awarded each month for the best item.*—EDITORS THE NATION.]

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Issues and Men

BY OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD

A Merchant Marine for War

THE acquisition of two three-masted, square-rigged ships by the United States Maritime Commission to be used in connection with the government's new training school for merchant seamen calls fresh attention to the activities of the commission. This is a body well worth watching. Headed by a retired rear admiral, its approach to the question of our merchant marine seems exclusively that of the navy. At least the relationship of the merchant fleet to our export and import trade appears entirely subordinated to what the navy wants. Thus, Rear Admiral Wiley, also retired, and also a member of the commission, has stated that, according to Navy Department estimates, the navy's minimum need will be 500 new merchant ships of various types within the next ten years and that these will be built. Based upon current costs this will mean an outlay of about $2,500,000,000 during that period. Contracts for building thirty-seven ships have already been let. It is plain that the commission is not considering whether the foreign commerce of the United States will need 500 such ships now or in 1948; the program is simply based on the decision of some anonymous officers in the Navy Department that the fleet will need these 500 ships as naval auxiliaries in our next war.

Well, this leaves the army not yet heard from. If the navy needs 500 merchant ships in addition to those we already have, what about the army? Will it not ask for at least 5,000 ships so as to be prepared to move an army across the seas with the necessary rapidity? We know that in 1917-18 it took more than 3,000 ships, plus all the English, French, Norwegian, and Dutch ships that were lent to us or that we forcibly borrowed. We know that army and navy men say that the mechanization of the modern army has increased so tremendously since the World War, as have also the size of guns and the amount of ammunition needed because of increased speed of firing, that to move again the same number of troops that we sent to France will take one-third more ships. In addition we know that we got very few airplanes to the front in 1917-18 and that airplanes have become an all-important branch of the service. Moreover, General Hagood has told us in his book "We Can Defend America" that on not one single day when our army was in France did that huge fleet land enough supplies, ammunition, and food to maintain our army for a day.

The newspapers of August 31 reported that although Congress appropriated more than a billion dollars for the regular expenses of army and navy for the current fiscal year, both War and Navy Department will ask for much more money next year—although the present naval program when completed will give the United States no fewer than 272 fighting vessels with a total tonnage of 1,517,480 tons, among them 18 battleships, 28 light cruisers, 18 heavy cruisers, 144 destroyers, and 56 submarines. Why not ask for 5,000 army transports, I repeat? Uncle Sam is ladling out the money, and for the first time in our history Congress is giving to the army and navy and merchant fleet more than the officials concerned have asked for.

The new merchant-marine training school, which is such an extraordinary departure for this country, is to be established on Hoffman and Swinburne Islands, the old Quarantine stations formerly used for pesthouses. The commission expects to train there 3,100 seamen and 2,000 licensed officers each year, and what a grand opportunity it will be, since instruction will be in the hands of Coast Guard officers, to pump into these men the belief that they must never, never have anything to do with labor unions, or think of concerning themselves with collective bargaining! I have no doubt that they will be expected to bring to the merchant marine naval ideas of absolute subordination to their officers. One good thing the commission is planning in connection with these men. According to reports, it has begun a radical reform by providing that seamen employed on these heavily subsidized merchant ships shall be engaged by the year and that the centuries-old custom of laying off the crew the minute a cargo ship arrives in port shall be done away with. One of the curses of the sea has been this putting men "on the beach" if a ship was going to lie in port some time before its next voyage. Nothing could do more to improve the status of the merchant sailor than to provide him with stability of employment, adequate food, and decent living quarters.

One question intrudes itself. If, as is now the case, the United States government lends working capital to the companies, makes good the deficits on voyages, pays heavily for mail service, and lends the company up to two-thirds of the value of the ship to help pay the building costs, and if it is now going to train the crews, and the compelling motive is to be to create ships as reserves for the army and navy, why should we not go the whole hog, eliminate the private operators, and make the fleet entirely a national fleet, like the Russian?

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BOOKS *and the* ARTS

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY FOR OUR TIME

BY PHILIP BLAIR RICE

THE plays in this collection of all the extant works of the Greek dramatists* seem at the same time very remote from us and very near. It is not likely that we can become greatly agitated over ancestral curses, funereal obligations, blood vengeance, and such baggage, which the playwrights took over from their barbarous past. Yet these, like Shakespeare's ghosts, merely furnished a local setting for matters of greater import. We do not have to read far in these forty-seven plays before we come upon some which deal not only with questions perennially recurrent but with themes that have a startling relevance to the current year of the devil.

The timeliness of certain of the ancient dramatists' concerns will be immediately apparent. No one has presented better than Aeschylus, in "The Persians," and Euripides, in "The Trojan Women," the impact of war upon the innocent, or better than Aristophanes, in his three pacifist comedies, war's folly. We too are witnessing the overweening pride of despots. We do not have to look far in order to discover those who, like Iphigenia, have learned what it means to sacrifice themselves for a greater cause. We see reenacted in Spain the fate that overtook Prometheus for bringing knowledge and the industrial arts to the slaves of Zeus. We can understand Antigone's conflict between loyalty to the state and a wider allegiance. At the moment a favorite theme of the tragic poets, the guest-right of suppliants, the sacred duty to give sanctuary to exiles, is reflected in the headlines of our newspapers.

Many of our writers, furthermore, have lately found a fresh impetus to reinterpret the old myths, legends, and symbols. Anthropology and psychoanalysis have made these more intelligible and renewed the insights from which they sprang. When our more skilful contemporaries, such as Mann, O'Neill, Lawrence, Eliot, and MacLeish, use them, it is not, as was too often the case formerly, for embellishment, but because the traditional scheme, slightly altered in perspective, expresses certain newly discovered or rediscovered truths about the human situation with greater simplicity and imaginative force than any other. Some of our poets are trying to solve the problem of form by seeking an equivalent of the varied and flexible Greek strophe. The adaptability of such a device as the Greek chorus to the needs of the new social drama has been more often proclaimed than realized in practice. It is not unreasonable to hope that a study of the Greek drama may help our playwrights, who with very few exceptions are now sunk in a lethargy of the imagination, to regain the freedom and poetic intensity of the symbolist and expressionist theater, while achieving a rationality of thought content which those movements lacked.

More important than any of these things might be the influence of the old plays in aiding us to win back the tragic and the comic sense of life. Professor Oates in the introduction suggests that tragedy rests upon three assumptions—the dignity of man, the sense of free will or responsibility, and the belief in some divine or superhuman power or force. Place these over against the problem of evil, he says, and the dramatic action will be tragic. Generalizing this prescription in such a way as to avoid transitory theological connotations, these assumptions might be amended to read—the potential dignity of man, the sense of will or choice, and the belief in some suprahuman laws or suprapersonal ideals. The problem of evil should likewise be taken to include the perennial problem how evil may be overcome, as well as the more limited question how evil came to exist, which is a problem only if you cling to certain theological preconceptions.

Near the end of "The Symposium" Plato tells us that Socrates was expounding to the two of his fellow-banqueters who were not yet under the table the thesis that tragedy and comedy are one in essence. Following up this hint, we may suggest that great comedy rests upon the same principles as tragedy, although it conceives them less vividly and brings them to a different focus. This difference of focus may be, as Santayana indicates, that comedy sees man from without, tragedy from within. The shift of focus would explain the tragi-comic status of Don Quixote, Charlie Chaplin, and Donald Duck.

Although the comic sense is always with us in some measure, it appears that now, as in Greece, the development of first-rate comedy must wait upon the emergence of authentic tragedy. In the decade since Mr. Krutch pronounced the obsequies of the tragic sense, the corpse has shown stirrings of life. The genuinely tragic, present in the more important works of Thomas Mann from the

*"The Complete Greek Drama." Edited by Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr. Random House. Two Volumes. $5.

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beginning, has been progressively intensified. Something very close to it can be found in Malraux's "Man's Fate" and in a number of lesser works, such as John Steinbeck's "In Dubious Battle." (His more popular "Of Mice and Men," like Hemingway's "To Have and Have Not" and most of the poems of Robinson Jeffers, is a specious article.) We live, as we are often told, in an age of faith, and this is one prerequisite to tragedy. Another is that this faith be doggedly questioned, so that it may become ethically mature and reasoned. Will there be time for this? An alarming possibility faces our writers today: that we must enact our tragedies before we can write them.

Despite the labors of the editors and the publisher of these two handsome volumes, whatever light the Greeks can cast upon these questions will remain beclouded until better translations of the tragedies are available. The comedies, done into current prose, are sprightly, unbowdlerized, and, except for the inevitable sacrifice of lyric qualities, thoroughly satisfactory. Of the tragedies, only R. C. Trevelyan's "Ajax" and F. M. Stawell's "Iphigenia in Aulis" avoid archaisms and try to reproduce the Greek cadences; they, however, are somewhat lacking in verbal beauty. Robert Potter and Thomas Francklin in the eighteenth century seem to have established the precedent for the barbarous mock-heroic idiom —a jargon never spoken or speakable by Anglo-Saxon man—which most of the translators have used, both in the metrical and in the prose versions. The plays done by Gilbert Murray stand out above the rest, in spite of the mannerisms and the Swinburnian lushness. That the Greeks have meant more to the poets than to the scholars is attested by the fact that Fitts's and Fitzgerald's "Alcestis" and MacNeice's "Agamemnon," which are probably too recent to be included here, promise better things. The Greeks are too precious to be lost: the poets must rescue them from the pedants.

G. D. H. Cole

PERSONS AND PERIODS. By G. D. H. Cole. The Macmillan Company. $3.75.

G. D. H. COLE must be ranked high among the Stakhanovists of authorship. In the twenty-five years since his first book appeared his output of works covering the past, present, and future of labor would do credit to a syndicate; yet with the aid of Margaret Cole he somehow finds leisure to throw off a mystery story or two every year. Moreover, Cole is by no means a secluded writing machine. He teaches at Oxford and is an active participant in the British labor movement.

At one time, as this reviewer has grateful cause to remember, Cole was an outstanding teacher of evening classes for workers. To this task he brought a real gift for clarity, skill in marshaling essentials, a faculty for always being in earnest without ever being dull, and an inability to talk down to his audience. It is these same qualities which have made him so good a guide to much larger audiences of plain men seeking light in the labyrinthine darkness of current politics and economics.

If Cole had not devoted himself to education in the wider sense, he might have won greater renown as a social historian. Even so, he has to his credit such works as "The Life of Robert Owen," and in this new volume we have further proof of his scholarship. It is a collection of essays, many of which have been published previously but now appear in a revised form, dealing mainly with social change in Britain since the beginning of the eighteenth century. It opens with two studies of Daniel Defoe, not in his capacity as author of "Robinson Crusoe" and "Moll Flanders," but as propagandist and reporter on economic conditions. We then pass by way of a consideration of the growth of urban society in Britain to a description of the legal savageries by which, in the early nineteenth century, the ruling classes sought to suppress any organization of the proletariat which accompanied that growth. This leads naturally to two fine studies of that early champion of the working classes, William Cobbett, whom Cole has done much to restore to his rightful place in social history. Finally, after one or two essays of lesser importance, we have discussions of three men who from the underlying ferment of their times distilled a potent brew of ideas—Rousseau, Robert Owen, and Marx.

The study of Marx first appeared as an introduction to the Everyman edition of "Capital" and is certainly a useful aid to the student of that most difficult work. Cole is not quite a whole-hearted Marxian, though he accepts the basic truth of the materialist conception of history and the theory of surplus value. He makes the interesting comment that Marx took a "mystical view of reality" which must be appreciated if his thought is to be understood.

> The One is for him more real than the many; and he is always reaching out for a real oneness underlying the phenomenal multiplicity of the capitalist world. He envisages a working class, which he has attempted to organize in the International Workingmen's Association, in process of becoming one, and he sees the capitalists of the world as banded together against the working class. This oneness alone is real. . . . The "detail laborer" is a mere abstraction; not individuals but only social classes possess ultimate reality.

Cole, though he might deny it, is a liberal as well as a Socialist; to him men can never be mere abstractions. That is why, though Marx has his respect, his affection goes to Cobbett, the full-blooded Englishman, incapable of scientific reasoning but powerfully moved by the logic of poverty and injustice.

> Above all else [writes Cole] I think of Cobbett as the man who, at a wretched time in the history of the English people, put hope into their hearts, not by telling lies or painting fancy pictures, either of this world or the next, but by good solid cursing that never degenerated into a whine or mere vaporing of despair, but bade men gird up their loins and struggle for the right.

And that too, in his own less boisterous way, the way of a teacher, is what G. D. H. Cole has been doing for the last quarter-century.

KEITH HUTCHISON

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Conversion to Violence

THE SUMMER SOLDIER. By Leane Zugsmith. Random House. $2.50.

THE LIBERALS. By John Hyde Preston. Reynal and Hitchcock: John Day Publications. $2.50.

A LIBERAL, according to recent news from the Hollywood political front, is a man who has both his feet firmly planted in the air. Miss Zugsmith and Mr. Preston devote their pages to showing just how ethereal air can be. Did they have to? The liberal has at least one virtue, he feels as well as his critics the atmospheric qualities of his footing, and he clings to it as much in doubt as in hope. If the liberal is ever the hero of historical change, he is likely to be a dejected one—a revolutionary Hamlet flanked by Lady Macbeths—gaining our tears more than our confidence. The liberal's faith persisting, nevertheless, that human deeds can be accomplished in reason and moderation, the slaying of this melancholy phoenix is the intention of "The Summer Soldier" and "The Liberals." Both volumes subject their liberal protagonists to contact with present-day industrial *mores*. In both volumes the protagonists either retire from the conflict or accept what is apparently the alternative—a conversion to violence. "He had seen the unavoidable, bloody conclusion of the liberal's logic," meditates Mr. Preston's hero, "and now he knew that his liberal position was, from this time on, forever untenable." "Violence," says Miss Zugsmith's minister, somewhat less oratorical in his brooding. "They have forced it upon us."

In one respect, however, these books differ, for the first of them, "The Summer Soldier," is a good novel. Leane Zugsmith is of course an able young writer. Witty, acute, more sensitive than powerful, she is to be sure a light novelist, but a light novelist of distinction who has been dealing with fresh and important social topics—a literary union, so to say, of Marx and Fanny Burney. If Miss Zugsmith's convictions are urgent, her manner is not; for an idealist she is well versed in human frailties; when, as in her present book, she treats of hatred she does so most sympathetically, and even her violence is never quite vicious. Her present subject—the pilgrimage of a group of reformers to a Southern mill town—is less dramatic than that of "A Time to Remember," in which she caught so vividly the ways of speech and thinking of department-store workers. Her most effective characters, too, are not those directly illustrating her thesis but the maladjusted playwright Donohue and the amusing adventuress Carol Gilman. Carol is like some other fashionable ladies who embrace revolution as the sequel to psychoanalysis, Donohue is typical of the disturbed mentality which seeks a release from personal conflicts in social ones, but both of them are distinctive in the humility with which they accept their own temperaments. Neither Donohue nor Carol are arguments for or against liberalism, and the virtue of Miss Zugsmith's story lies simply in its account of the very human reactions of average citizens to the corruption and the casual brutality which condition the lives of large portions of the American people.

I wish I could say as much for "The Liberals." It presents a richer statement of the intellectual position and conflicts

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of the liberal; its theme—the conversion to revolutionary thought of Philip Whitlock, another playwright and also neurotic—is related to an interesting study of a New England industrial family; but it is a weak novel. Though Mr. Preston paints his revolutionary cause quite as attractively as he does his heroine Ann, we care about as little that Phil espouses the one as the other. Mr. Preston, moreover, slaps his moral upon his little social scene, which does not necessarily deserve it, just as other theorists of historical determinism have fixed their own upon the larger one—and so to a certain extent have created the future they have fancied. For it now appears, as modern psychological science echoes ironically the rejected doctrine of free will, that the "inevitable" lies also within us. MAXWELL GEISMAR

Jews in America

ROOTS IN THE SKY. By Sidney Meller. The Macmillan Company. $3.

OUT of the life of Jews in America and the age-old struggle between orthodox parents and errant children Sidney Meller has made a rich and flavorous novel. Using an approach that reminds one of Dos Passos, he freights his narrative with the trenchant details of many lives, focusing equally on each of the many members of the Drobnen family. At the center, most impressive of all, is the father, orthodox old-world rabbi, utterly man of God, fountain of Talmudic learning, humble, childlike, rooted in the sky; at his side, blindly sacrificial, guiding her husband in practical things but worshiping him spiritually, doggedly resisting all Americanization, is his wife; and flowing away from them into all channels of New World life are their six children—David, trying desperately to follow his father's ideals but ever groping and unhappy; Miriam, the thwarted, neuroses-ridden old maid; Aba, the introspective intellectual seeking a meaning, a credo, and a function; Leo, crass, scheming, money-mad. But the significant thing here is that a handful of epithets will not capture the full-bodied, three-dimensional individuality these characters possess in the book; they resist summation because there is about them all the flux and complexity of human nature itself.

Around them, with many authentic touches, the author has thrown the spirit and atmosphere of the American Jewish community, stroking in with special care the relationship between the Rabbi and those pillars of Jewish society, the elders who support and rule his synagogue. The portraits of these lay figures, of their chicanery, hypocrisy, and infrequent goodness, offer striking contrasts to the bright exotic fabric of the Rabbi's life—a fabric woven of Talmudic wisdom, holy fervor, and a dizzying pattern of esoteric ritual. Throughout there is the struggle between the parents and the children, but it is the conflict between the Rabbi, so naive in his faith, and the ruthless, canting lay leaders that furnishes the immediate drama and the narrative climax. Although the excursions into religious ritual are sometimes over long, and although from time to time variety pushes out concentration, these seem venial faults, for "Roots in the Sky" is a full book, a vivid and pithy book, and occasionally a very moving one. MILTON RUGOFF

RECORDS

A READER of this column writes: "Some months ago you sharply reduced the amount of space accorded jazz or swing records. I presume that this change was in response to letters from readers. I should like to urge that you give more attention to swing. Your judgment in the field is excellent and your advice is much the best that I see."

When I first discussed jazz here I contended that readers who, like myself, appreciated inventive power and imagination and taste in cultivated music and its performance should, as I did, appreciate these qualities in certain hot or improvised performances by outstanding jazz players. I had occasion to reaffirm this belief when I mentioned the disapproval of some readers and the approval of others to my giving space to jazz; and it is still my belief. If I have given less space to this music recently it is only because there has been so little that required mention.

During the past winter I listened to every new record of Teddy Wilson, and was appalled by playing that mechanically traced patterns of a style which no longer had living impulse behind it. One record recently caused me to sit up in surprise and pleasure over a solo in which Wilson's playing was again the live and fascinating thing it had been two years before; but the next day someone reminded me that this record, "All My Life," was in fact one that Wilson had made two years ago and that was now reissued. And one new record, "Jungle Love," I thought fair.

I listened also to Duke Ellington's records; and only two —"Braggin' in Brass" and "Harmony in Harlem"—approach some of the records of five and six years ago that have been cut out of the Brunswick catalogue to make room for the uninteresting and pretentious things Ellington has been turning out recently. In Benny Goodman's output of the year I found one good record—"One O'Clock Jump," which I mentioned a while ago. Red Norvo's best was beautifully sensitive performances of written accompaniments of Mildred Bailey's singing—good recent examples being "Small Fry" and "Born to Swing" on Vocalion, "The Sunny Side of Things" and "Put Your Heart in a Song" on Brunswick. But a few years ago Mildred Bailey sang with improvised accompaniments ("Some Day, Sweetheart" on Vocalion, "Willow Tree" on English Parlophone) which were vastly more exciting; now it is only Billie Holiday who does that; and it is because of the instrumental background and interlude that one accepts her affected singing in the recent "Says My Heart." What Claude Thornhill is capable of doing on a piano he showed in the superb "Tillie's Downtown Now" on English Parlophone, but not in the written accompaniments of Maxine Sullivan's charming singing—an exception being the recent "Please Be Kind." And that is all I have to report now.

The miraculous sounds that Koussevitzky produces with the Boston Symphony Orchestra are reproduced better than I have ever heard before by the Victor set of Prokofiev's amusing trifle "Lieutenant Kije" (three records, $6.50), with the March and the delightful Scherzo from "The Love of Three Oranges" on the sixth side. These miraculous sounds

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are one thing that makes Koussevitzky an unequaled conductor of Debussy's music; another thing is his interpretative insight into this music. Whom, therefore, does Victor select to record Debussy's "Ibéria"? Right you are: Barbirolli, who can get the New York Philharmonic to produce nothing more miraculous than the correct notes, and who as an interpreter achieves the feat of reducing even the joyousness and excitement of the last movement to stodginess and dulness (2½ records, $5).

Outstanding among Columbia releases is Haydn's fine Symphony No. 93, superbly played by the London Philharmonic under Beecham and excellently recorded (three records, $5). Columbia also offers a new set of Franck's Quintet made by E. Robert Schmitz and the Roth Quartet (five records, $7.50)—one that might be a good set if the strings were not recorded so poorly, and so weakly in relation to the piano. And the surfaces have got to the point now where even a chromium needle begins to give defective reproduction by the end of the first side, or at the latest the middle of the second side.

B. H. HAGGIN

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Letters to the Editors

Gunther's Figures Questioned

Dear Sirs: With the main thesis of John Gunther's article Will Japan Hold Out? in *The Nation* of August 13 I am in full agreement. No sane observer can believe that China will win a complete victory *soon*, or that Japan will crack up in the near future. To make this point, he necessarily painted the darker shadings—possibly with somewhat too heavy a brush.

On certain matters of fact with regard to Japan, however, he is definitely in error. The Japanese debt has not increased from twelve to seventeen billion yen in a single year. To achieve this result Mr. Gunther has simply added the deficit loans in the recent Japanese budget to Japan's known public debt. But budgetary loans are not floated all at once, and meanwhile the debt is being serviced and partially reduced. Japan's actual public debt is closer to the first figure—twelve billion yen—than to the second.

I question the assertion that there is no currency inflation in Japan. The Bank of Japan's note issue is running currently at nearly two billion yen, or roughly 400 million above that of a year ago. With the statutory gold reserve reduced to 500 million yen, coverage is not 40 per cent but 25 per cent. Mr. Gunther's statement that "some gold has been sold," shipped abroad, is a masterpiece of understatement. Gold shipments since March, 1937, will soon aggregate $400,000,000, leaving Japan with approximately $150,000,000. The same holds true for his statement that "prices are generally rising." They have been rising so rapidly that Japan has been forced to fix retail prices by government edict, enforced by some 3,800 "economic police" officers.

It may be true that totalitarian states can "perform incredible juggleries with money" in the domestic field. But they cannot produce gold or foreign exchange where none exists, and this is the crux of Japan's economic problem. To say that Japan "has been a totalitarian state since about the sixteenth century," moreover, is to coin a striking aphorism but to add little to our knowledge of Japanese politics. It seems to mean that there is no political struggle going on there worth considering or analyzing. Surely Mr. Gunther does not wish to dismiss the critical developments in Japan's political life since 1931 as beneath notice.

Mr. Gunther's article performs a distinct service. It makes clear that this devastating war may go on for years. Some action by the outside world seems to be called for. At the very least, the United States might stop supplying Japan with the war materials and the foreign exchange used for its campaign of destruction.

T. A. BISSON

New York, August 30

No Basic Differences

Dear Sirs: I don't imagine that Mr. Bisson and I differ much in basic attitudes. I am sorry if he doubts my figures. Most of them came from the *Japan Advertiser*, the excellent American daily published in Tokyo. Where are Mr. Bisson's from?

JOHN GUNTHER

Norwalk, Conn., September 2

Saroyan Anthology

Dear Sirs: I am editing "An Anthology of Lousy Writing," and want contributions from good published writers who have at one time or another, preferably recently, written badly. Contributions must be worse than just ordinarily bad and their authors must be better than just ordinarily good. Each contributor is invited to comment on his contribution: how it happened to be written, et cetera. The book will contain short stories, chapters of novels, poems, essays, criticism, book reviews, plays, scenarios, and any other kind of writing by good writers that happens to be lousy. All contributions must be unpublished. Each piece will appear in the book without the name of its author, so that the reader may try to guess who the author is. The last part of the book will be devoted to the comments of the authors. No invitations will be sent direct to writers, so that only those who appreciate the value of the Anthology will be in it. If good writers send me lousy writing, this project will not be a gag but an undertaking of far-reaching importance. All material must be mailed by September 30. My address is 348 Carl Street, San Francisco.

WILLIAM SAROYAN

San Francisco, August 29

Police-Chief Tyranny

Dear Sirs: A local committee received permission from the management of the Sea Breeze Theater at Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, to distribute circulars in connection with a two-day showing of "Blockade." On the second evening this permission was abruptly withdrawn, and the committee was notified by the chief of police, Gus Ameral, that distribution of North American Committee leaflets would be prohibited and that distributors would be arrested. The police chief said that he had received many complaints about the distribution of these "communist" leaflets. He presented a copy of the *Sunday Visitor* of August 21 as evidence that "Blockade" and its supporters were "reds." He refused to name the complainants or to specify his reasons for ruling that distribution was illegal. He ignored the committee's citation of Massachusetts constitutional rights and the Supreme Court's handbill decision of last spring. Five policemen were placed at the exit of the theater to prevent violation of the chief's ruling.

The committee did not intend to take up a collection in public places. Its purpose was to distribute literature in the interest of a humanitarian cause. We recommend that protest be made to the governor of the state, to the Massachusetts press (especially to the Martha's Vineyard *Gazette*), and to sympathetic religious bodies in Massachusetts, particularly in Martha's Vineyard, demanding that the chief of police be censured and that the right of distributing North American Committee literature be guaranteed.

HELEN ASCHE, ANN CHAMPION, SARAH GREENBAUM, HELEN GUDE, ALMA DAVIS HAYS, ARTHUR GARFIELD HAYS, MARJORIE M. JACOBSON, CORLISS LAMONT, MARGARET I. LAMONT, ANITA MARBURG, ELIZABETH F. MC GHEE, SYDNEY MILLER.

Vineyard Haven, Mass., August 29

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